

The Five Unsung Heroes of Health

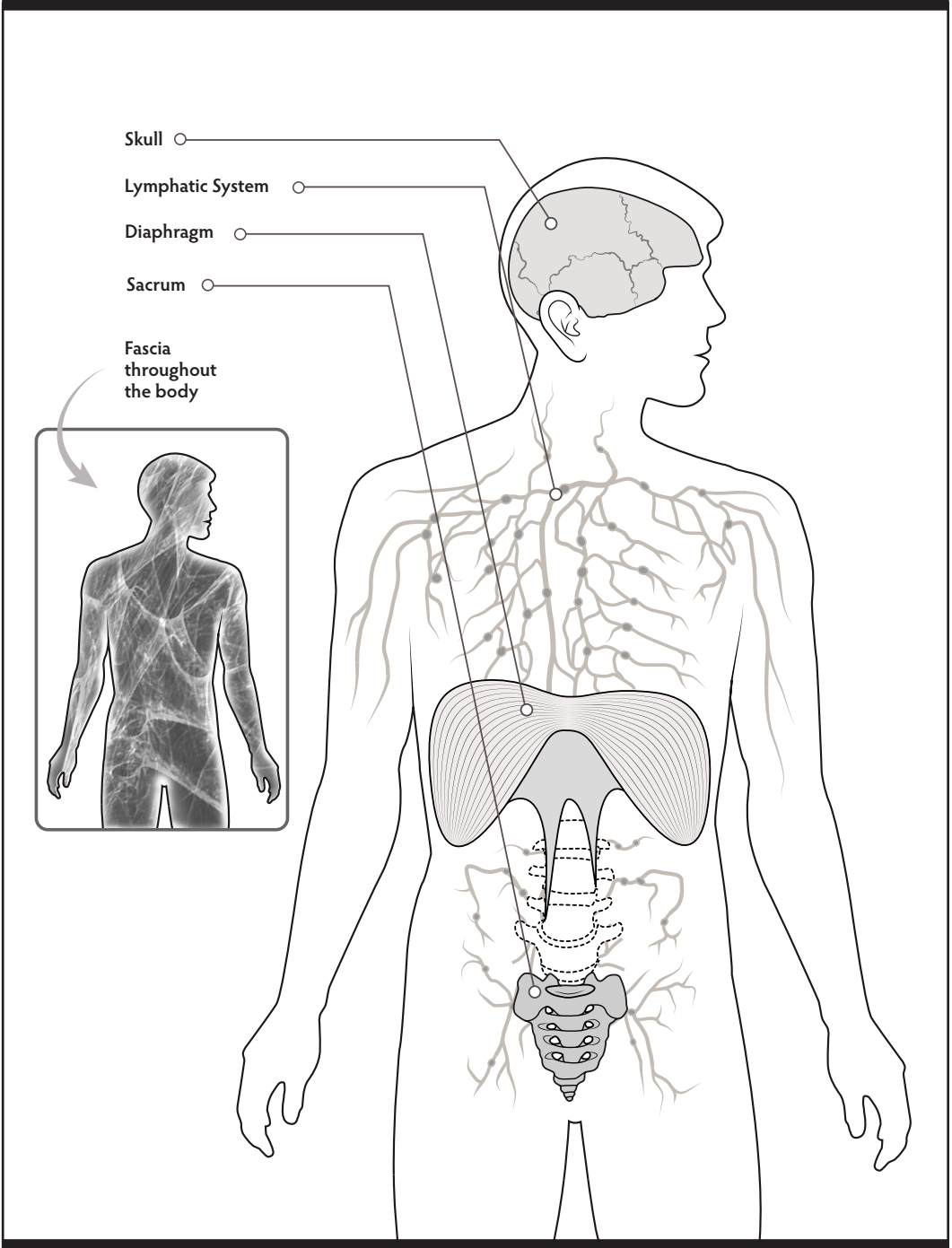
Life is motion. Every fluid, every cell, every organ, joint, and bone moves, pulsates, or ebbs and flows. These fierce rhythmic motions heal us, but sometimes they need help. That's why, in order to fully revitalize a person healing from trauma, motion must be restored to stagnant and restricted tissues.

We know that the heart must beat fully and the lungs expand freely for vibrant health. But the free motion of other organs is also crucial. The gut must pulsate as it removes nutrients from the bowel and funnels the goodies into the blood. The liver must rock to turn nutrients into hormones as it processes toxins to make them less poisonous. And the most essential organ of all, the brain, must beat six to fourteen times a minute, enlivening the whole nervous system.

Just as essential for health are the waves of fluid that permeate the body. These include the free flow of cerebral spinal fluid within the spinal cord and brain, the flow of blood and lymphatic fluid throughout their respective circulatory systems, and the other currents that surge through all cells.

In my many years of practice, I have come to realize that trauma can compromise any of these motions. Restoring motion, both simple and profound, is the third essential component of healing from trauma.

Given the body's vast interconnectedness, a problem in one part or system of the body can have distant repercussions. A twisted ankle can result in headaches and menstrual cramps as the body twists and turns to compensate for the injured joint. An area whose tissues are compressed can become a monkey wrench in the body's complex mechanics, causing the body to scream with pain at a point quite distant from the primary injury.



This section describes ways to answer the body's many calls for help. Although the parts of the body always operate together in a kinetic chain of motion, restrictions in certain areas have more dire consequences. There are five critical areas that, being heroes when they move vibrantly, tend to be the biggest culprits of ill health when they don't. I call them the five unsung heroes of health.

When I treat, I pay special attention to these five structural elements: the diaphragm, the lymphatic system, the sacrum, the fascia, and the skull. Most practitioners tend to focus on the more immediate symptoms of trauma and overlook these heroes. But I have found that when these often-ignored heroes are treated, healing proceeds much more quickly.

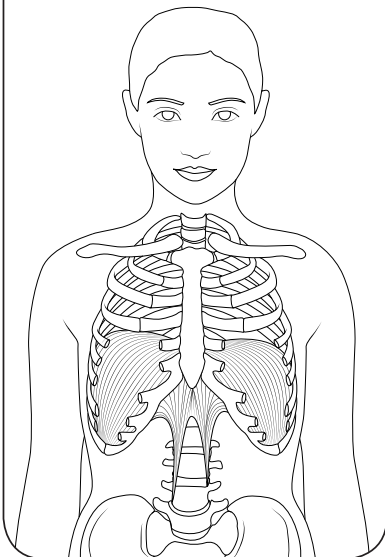
THE DIAPHRAGM: Affecting Every System in the Body

I've already introduced the first hero, the diaphragm. In the chapter on the breath, I highlighted the diaphragm's critical role in breathing and calming an agitated nervous system. In the section on inflammation, I celebrated its role in pumping the vital lymphatic system. Because the diaphragm connects to so many systems and organs, it is one of the most important keys to both health and recovery from injury and illness. Without a fully functioning diaphragm, you can suffer from constipation, reflux (GERD) and other digestive problems, high blood pressure, heart disease, asthma, bronchitis and other breathing

problems, fibromyalgia, depression, anxiety, infections, fatigue, neck and back pain, and problems with healing.

How does one muscle manage to be so important? The mighty diaphragm is not only anchored to the rib cage, breastbone, and spine. Its fibers also fan out to the heart above and the liver below and weave into the beginning of the stomach. Openings in the diaphragm allow passage to the esophagus, the great vessels of the heart, and the miraculous lymphatic channels. When the diaphragm is working well, every contraction moves the rib cage, tractions the low back, massages the liver and adrenal glands, keeps stomach acid contained, helps pump the blood, circulates the lymphatic fluid, assists fluid flow into and out of cells, and moves the other systems to which it is so intimately connected. Throughout the book, I talk about the diaphragm and its crucial role in health.

the diaphragm



THE LYMPHATIC SYSTEM:

The Key to Controlling Inflammation

In the section on inflammation, I showed how the second unsung hero, the lymphatic system, creates the body's immune channels and toxin-removal system, which is key to controlling inflammation (see chapter 8). In the section on brain injury, we'll see how the brain's system for clearing toxins, including the potentially damaging proteins that cause Alzheimer's disease, is intimately tied to the lymphatic system.

Like so much of the body, the lymphatics depend on the heroic diaphragm to flow freely. Restricting the movement of the lymphatics can lead to inflammation, pain, infection, and ill health.

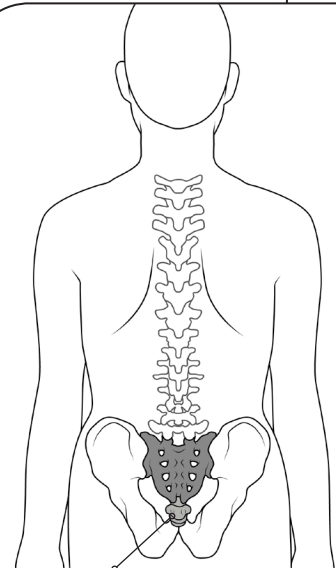
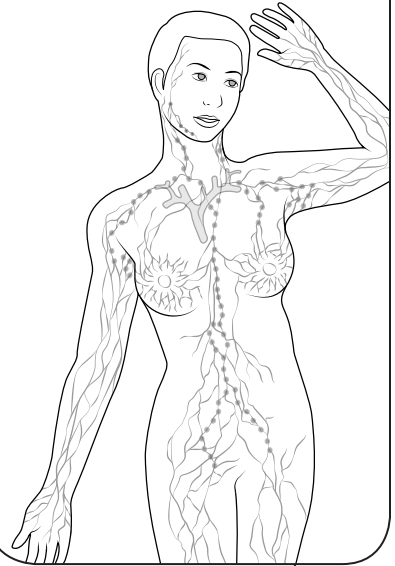
THE SACRUM: Foundation of the Body

The third unsung hero, the sacrum, is a complex of bone at the end of the spinal column. The sacrum is in charge of everything from reproduction to digestion. It supports the pelvis and upper body and rocks in rhythm with the pulsations of the brain. It moves even more when we walk as it distributes the forces generated by our movement. It pumps the spinal discs and lumbar fascia, preserves the health of the spine, and keeps the low back free of pain.

Since nerves to the sex organs come through the sacrum, a restricted sacrum can cause problems with fertility, erections, and menstruation. The central nervous system ends in front of the coccyx bone at the tip of the sacrum. Since the sacrum is connected to the brain by the dural membrane, free sacral mobility is essential for neurological health. Injury to the sacrum can cause everything from headaches and sexual dysfunction to low-back pain and lumbar-disc herniations. Restore the sacrum to its proper position, and *voilà!*—your life has lovely juice again.

I talk about the sacrum in the chapters on the back, the pelvis, and sexual healing.

the lymphatic system



the coccyx bone

the sacrum